

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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INFO AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L OSLO 3361

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR PFOR NO IC

SUBJECT: ICELAND: NORWEGIAN DEMARCHE

REF: REYKJAVIK 1043

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS VIBE CALLED ME IN ON SEPTEMBER 11 TO RECEIVE THE TEXT OF PRO MEMORIA ON THE SUBJECT OF KEFLAVIK BASE GIVEN TO ICELANDIC PRIME MINISTER JOHANNESSON ON SEPTEMBER 6, IN HIS CAPACITY AS ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER. (TEXT BEING CABLED SEPARATELY.) VIBE SAID THAT FRG IS ONLY OTHER STATE INFORMED ABOUT NORWEGIAN APPROACH. HE STRESSED SENSITIVITY OF INFORMATION AND URGED THAT WE NOT RPT NOT DISCUSS APPROACH OR COMMUNICATION WITH ANY ALLIES. HE EXPLAINED DECISION TO STRESS NORWEGIAN SECURITY RATHER THAN NATO IN THE COMMUNICATION AS ESSENTIALLY A TACTICAL ONE MADE IN THE LIGHT OF THE STRONG ANTI-NATO FEELINGS PREVAILING TODAY IN ICELAND. VIBE FELT THAT THE RELATIVELY FAVORABLE REACTION OF JOHANNESSON TO THE NORWEGIAN MOVE INDICATED THAT THE NORWEGIAN TACTICAL APPROACH WAS THE CORRECT ONE. END SUMMARY

2. VIBE BEGAN BY REFERRING TO "HINTS" PASSED BY AMERICAN AMBASSADOR IN REYKJAVIK AND SUGGESTIONS RECEIVED FROM STATE DEPARTMENT THAT IT WOULD BE HELPFUL IF NORWAY WERE CONFIDENTIAL

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TO INDICATE TO ICELAND ITS GREAT INTEREST IN THE RETENTION OF KEFLAVIK BASE BY NATO. NORWAY WAS PROMPTED TO TAKE THIS STEP NOT ONLY BY OUR APPROACHES BUT ALSO BY ITS OWN CONCERN THAT SITUATION MIGHT CHANGE SUDDENLY AND THE ICE-

LANDERS CLAIM THEY WERE NOT AWARE OF EXTENT OF NORWEGIAN INTEREST IN KEFLAVIK. OSLO HAD HESITATED RAISING THE MATTER BEFORE WITH ICELAND OUT OF FEAR THAT ITS APPROACH MIGHT BE INTERPRETED AS PRESSURE AND HAVE THE OPPOSITE EFFECT.

3. NORWAY'S DECISION TO APPROACH THE ICELANDERS WAS FACILITATED BY THEIR ACTION IN INVOKING DISCUSSION OF IDF ISSUE IN NATO UNDER ARTICLE 7 OF THE BASE AGREEMENT. NORWEGIAN AMBASSADOR ACCORDINGLY APPROACHED JOHANNESSON LAST THURSDAY ON THE PRETEXT THAT CONSULTATIONS PRIOR TO DISCUSSION IN NATO WOULD PERMIT ICELAND TO KNOW THE NORWEGIAN POSITION. VIBE DID NOT SAY THAT TIMING OF APPROACH WAS DICTATED BY THE ABSENCE OF ICELANDIC FOREIGN MINISTER, BUT HE DID ACKNOWLEDGE IT WAS A HAPPY CONINCIDENCE SINCE IT IS COMMONLY SAID IN REYKJAVIK NOW THAT JOHANNESSON IS THE MAN TO APPROACH ON THIS QUESTION.

4. FRG FOREIGN MINISTER SCHEEL IS THE ONLY OTHER FOREIGN OFFICIAL TO BE INFORMED OF THE NORWEGIAN APPROACH. BONN HAD ASKED NORWAY WHETHER IT FAVORED A JOINT NATO APPROACH IN REYKJAVIK OR NEW APPROACH BY SYG LUNS AND WAS ADVISED AGAINST APPEARING TO GANG-UP ON THE ICELANDERS IN REYKJAVIK. VIBE SAID HIS GOVERNMENT FELT THAT A SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME TO THE FRG-ICELANDIC FISHERY NEGOTIATIONS WOULD BE HELPFUL IN THE SITUATION AND IT HAS SO INFORMED BONN.

5. JOHANNESSON'S REACTION WAS DESCRIBED BY THE NORWEGIAN AMBASSADOR TO ICELAND AS RATHER FAVORABLE. WHILE HE DID NOT DISCUSS THE SEPARATE POINTS IN THE NORWEGIAN STATEMENT, HE SAID THEY WOULD BE CAREFULLY CONSIDERED "IN THE SPIRIT IN WHICH I KNOW THEY ARE ADVANCED." JOHANNESSON NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE FISHING DISPUTE WITH THE UK HAD STRONGLY INFLUENCED PUBLIC OPINION IN ICELAND WITH REGARD BOTH TO KEFLAVIK AND NATO. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT ICELAND'S SECURITY REQUIREMENTS WERE AN INDEPENDENT CONSIDERATION FROM ITS FISHING DISPUTE, AND HE DID NOT BELIEVE THAT IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO RESOLVE THE DISPUTE BY CLOSING DOWN THE CONFIDENTIAL

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BASE OR LEAVING NATO. HE ARGUED WHILE PUBLIC OPINION IS OFTEN GOVERNED BY EMOTION AND NOT GOOD SENSE, IT MUST BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION. JOHANNESSON EXPRESSED HIS APPRECIATION FOR THE FACT THAT THE NORWEGIAN FOREIGN MINISTER WAS THE "ONLY PERSON" WHO HAD SUPPORTED ICELAND WITHOUT RESERVATIONS (APPARENTLY REFERRING TO THE NATO MINISTERIAL IN COPENHAGEN).

6. ASKED WHETHER NORWAY HAD RECEIVED ANY INDICATIONS FROM THE ICELANDERS CONCERNING THEIR POSITION ON KEFLAVIK AND THE POSSIBILITY OF COMPROMISE, VIBE SAID THAT HE HAD ASKED THE ICELANDERS THE SAME QUESTION AND RECEIVED ONLY VAGUE ANSWERS. HE WAS TOLD, IN EFFECT, THAT THE ICELANDIC GOVERNMENT

IS SO SPLIT ON THE ISSUE THAT ANY FIRM POSITION WILL BE
DIFFICULT TO OBTAIN. IT MAY BE NECESSARY TO PRESENT A
SERIES OF OPTIONS TO THE PARLIAMENT FOR IT TO DECIDE.

7. WHEN THE NATO COUNCIL DISCUSSES THE MILITARY COMMITTEE
REPORT NEXT WEEK, THE NORWEGIAN DELEGATE WILL NOT MENTION
THE APPROACH TO THE ICELANDERS BUT WILL PARAPHRASE THE
PRO MEMORIA IN HIS REMARKS. VIBE STRESSED SEVERAL TIMES
THE GREAT SENSITIVITY OF OUR DISCUSSION, ASKING THAT WE
NOT DISCUSS THE NORWEGIAN APPROACH WITH ANY OF OUR ALLIES.
BUCHANAN

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